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Readings Booklet

January 1996



English 33

Part B: Reading

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

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January 1996
English 33 Part B: Reading
Readings Booklet
Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

Part B: Reading contributes 50% of the total English 33 Diploma Examination mark.

There are 8 reading selections in the Readings Booklet and 70 questions in the Questions Booklet.

Time: 2 hours. You may take an additional 1/2 hour to complete the examination.

Instructions

- Be sure that you have an English 33 Readings Booklet **and** an English 33 Questions Booklet.
- You may **not** use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other reference materials.



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I. Questions 1 to 7 in your Questions Booklet are based on this short story.

SNAKE DANCE¹

"Hello. That you, Mom? . . . Oh, I'm sorry, operator, I thought I was connected with . . . No, I'm trying to get long distance . . . What? Centerville, Ohio, ring five. I told that other operator . . . What? . . . I *am* holding it."

He fished nervously in his pocket for a pack of cigarettes, pulled one cigarette
5 out of the pack with his thumb and forefinger, and stuck it swiftly between his lips. He glanced at his watch and scowled. The game had been over for half an hour. The snake dance would be coming down the street this way any minute now. With his free hand he tore a match from the book of matches, and propped the telephone receiver for a moment between shoulder and ear while he struck the
10 match on the flap. As he put the match to the tip of the cigarette, a thin voice rasped vaguely inside the receiver, and he whipped out the match.

"Hello. Mom? . . . Oh, I'm sorry," he mumbled. "How much?" He took a handful of silver from his pocket and began to drop the coins into the slot of the pay telephone. He could hear someone speaking above the echoing reverberations
15 inside the phone.

"What? Oh, Mom? Hello, Mom. This is Jerry. I say, this is—Can you hear me now? . . . Sure, I can hear you fine . . . Sure, I'm all right. I'm fine. And you? . . . That's fine.

"Mom"—and his voice seemed to falter for a fraction of a second. Then:
20 "How is he? Is there any change?"

There was a tiny silence.

"Oh." His voice was a little duller when he spoke again. "I see. Yeh. This afternoon, eh? And that other specialist, he said the same thing? Um-humm . . . Oh, sure, sure. No, of course, Mom, there's nothing to worry about. No, I'm not
25 worried; I only just called to find out if there was any change, that was all. . . . Did they say he could ever—I mean, can he move his arms any yet?" He gulped. "Well, that doesn't mean anything, really . . . No, of course, all those things take time. Sure, a year, maybe less . . . What?"

He took a second cigarette out of his pocket and thrust it between his lips
30 nervously. He lit it from the stub of the first one and ground out the stub beneath his heel.

"What money? Oh, you mean the money I sent you last week? Now, Mom," impatiently, "I told you all about that already in the letter, didn't I? . . . Sure it's a

Continued

¹Snake Dance—an informal parade in which the celebrants join hands in a long line, winding back and forth as they progress

35 scholarship. I got it for playing football. And so naturally I didn't need all that money you and Pop had been saving up for me to go to college, and so I just thought maybe with Pop being laid up now for a while and all . . .

"Where? Why right here." He frowned. "No, this isn't exactly a dormitory; it's—I live here in the fraternity house, you see. Sure I'm in a fraternity. It's the one Pop wanted me to join, too, tell him . . . No, honest, Mom, it doesn't cost me a
40 cent for my room. It's on account of my football."

He opened the folding door a little. He thought he could hear the band in the distance.

"Who, me? Homesick? Not so you'd notice it." He laughed. "I'm having the time of my life here. Everybody's so swell. I know practically everybody
45 here at Dover already. They even call me by my first name. Say, if you don't think I'm sitting pretty, you ought to see my fraternity house here." He gazed out through the glass door of the phone booth.

"Every night the fellows sit around and we drink beer and chew the fat till . . . Oh, no. No Mom. Just beer. Or we go down to Semple's for a milk shake . . .
50 No, that's only the drugstore . . . No." He smiled slowly. "I promised you I wouldn't drink, Mom."

In the distance now he could hear the sound of the band approaching.

"Well, Mom, I gotta hang up now. The gang'll be here in a minute. We're having a celebration after the game today. We played Alvord—took 'em sixteen
55 to nothing. . . . Sure I did, the whole game; you oughta seen me in there. I made two touchdowns. Everybody's going down to Semple's after the game, and I gotta be ready, because of course they'll all want me to be there too. Can you hear the band now?"

It was growing louder, and the eager voices in the snake dance could be heard
60 above the brasses, chanting the score of the game in time with the band.

"Now, listen, Mom. One other thing before they get here. Mom, see, I'm going to be sending you about ten or twelve dollars or so each week from now on until Pop is better. . . . No, Mom. Heck, I got plenty. Sure they always fix you up with a soft job if you're a good enough player. The alumni do it. . . . Here
65 they are now. Hear them?"

The band had halted outside. Someone led a cheer.

"That's for me, Mom. . . . Sure. Didn't I practically win the game for them today? Hear that?" He kicked open the door of the phone booth.

He held the receiver toward the open door of the phone booth. They were
70 calling "Jerry! Hey Jerry, hang up on that babe!"

"Hear that, Mom? Now goodbye. And look by the way, if you should ever happen to see Helen," he added carelessly, "tell her I couldn't ask her up to the

Continued

freshman dance like I planned, but with the football season and my scholarship and all—tell her, Mom. She—she didn't answer my last letter. O.K. Mom. Tell
75 Pop everything's O.K., see? Now don't worry . . . 'Bye.'

He replaced the receiver slowly on the hook and stared at the mouthpiece a moment. As he opened the door and stepped out of the booth, he could see his reflection for a moment in the tall mirror behind the soda fountain—the familiar white cap, the white jacket with "Semple's" stitched in red letters on the pocket.
80 The crowd was lined along the soda fountain, shouting, "Jerry!" "Milk shake, Jerry!"

Corey Ford

American writer (1902–1969)

Corey Ford wrote for magazines such as *Life*,
Vanity Fair, *Judge*, and *The New Yorker*.

II. Questions 8 to 14 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

AUGUST'S GRAVITY

- Walking home in early evening
I see in unkind juxtaposition
dragonfly on pavement
stranded by season's end
5 flopping helplessly
- my finger touching its searching legs
it clings
so I can hold it upright
this survivor from the times
10 of Tyrannosaurus
unable to survive much
beyond the first frost
it attempts an escape
but cannot overcome
15 late August's gravity
- picking it up again
I cup it from the breeze
so this fierce navigator
of summer gardens
20 can endure the indignity
of my hot-breath
on its way home to my young son
who will shriek
and try to hold it.
- 25 As if sensing this final
humiliation
it gathers up its memories
of mid-summer air
and rises on invisible wings
30 leaving me heavy and human
on the sidewalk
staring it into a dark speck
in the darkening blue.

William B. Robertson
Contemporary Canadian poet

III. Questions 15 to 24 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a play.

from WHEN YOU COMIN BACK, RED RYDER?

The dialogue in this play is written in a way that reflects the dialects of the two characters. This is the opening scene of the play.

The setting is a diner in the desert in southern New Mexico. The period is the end of the 1960s. STEPHEN RYDER—who prefers the nickname RED—is alone reading a newspaper. It is 6:05 A.M. and he has just finished working the night shift at the all-night diner. He waits impatiently for his replacement, ANGEL. STEPHEN is nineteen. In manner and dress, he is “an unconscious parody . . . of the mid-fifties”—slick hair combed straight back, shirt buttons opened halfway down his chest, a tattoo that says “Born Dead.” The dialogue begins with ANGEL’s entrance.

ANGEL: I’m sorry I’m late. My mom and me, our daily fight was a little off schedule today. (STEPHEN *loudly shuffles the paper, sucks his teeth.*) I said I’m sorry, Stephen. Geez. I’m only six minutes late.

STEPHEN: Only six minutes, huh? I got six minutes to just hang around this joint when my shift’s up, right? This is really the kinda dump I’m gonna hang around in my spare time, ain’t it?

ANGEL: Stephen, that’s a paper cup you got your coffee in. (STEPHEN *is entrenched behind his newspaper.*)

STEPHEN: Clark¹ can afford it, believe me.

ANGEL: That’s not the point, Stephen.

STEPHEN: Oh no? You’re gonna tell me the point though, right? Hold it—lemme get a pencil.

ANGEL: The point is that if you’re drinkin your coffee here, you’re supposed to use a glass cup, and if it’s to go, you’re supposed to get charged fifteen instead of ten and ya get one of those five cent paper cups to take it with you with. That’s the point, Stephen.

STEPHEN: Yeah, well I’m takin it with me, so where’s the problem?

(STEPHEN *has taken the last cigarette from a pack, slipped the coupon into his shirt pocket and crumpled the pack. He basketball shoots it across the service area.*)

ANGEL: Stephen. (She retrieves the pack and begins her morning routine: filling salt and pepper shakers, the sugar dispensers, setting out place mats,

Continued

¹Clark—the owner of the diner

- and cleaning up the mess* STEPHEN *evidently leaves for her each morning. STEPHEN reaches over and underneath the counter and pulls up a half empty carton of Raleighs and slides out a fresh pack. He returns the carton and slaps the new pack down on the counter.*) What're ya gonna get with your cigarette coupons, Stephen? (STEPHEN *reads his paper, smokes, sips his coffee.*) Stephen? (STEPHEN *lowers the newspaper.*)
- 25 STEPHEN: How many times I gotta tell ya to don't call me Stephen.
- 30 ANGEL: I don't like callin ya Red. It's stupid—callin somebody with brown hair Red.
- STEPHEN: It's my name, ain't it? I don't like Stephen. I like Red. When I was a kid I had red hair.
- ANGEL: But ya don't now. Now ya got brown hair.
- 35 STEPHEN (*Exasperated*): But *then* I did, and then's when counts.
- ANGEL: Who says *then's* when counts?
- STEPHEN: The person that's doin the *countin*! Namely yours truly! I don't call you . . . Caroline or . . . *Madge*, do I?
- ANGEL: Because those aren't my name. My name's Angel, so—
- 40 STEPHEN: Yeah, well ya don't look like no angel to me.
- ANGEL: I can't help that, Stephen. At least I was named my name at birth. Nobody asked me if I'd mind bein named Angel, but at least—
- STEPHEN: You could change it, couldn't ya?
- ANGEL: What for? To what?
- 45 STEPHEN (*Thinking for a moment, setting her up*): To Mabel.
- ANGEL: How come Mabel?
- STEPHEN: Yeah . . . Mabel.
- ANGEL: How come? You like Mabel?
- STEPHEN: I *hate* Mabel. (STEPHEN *stares at her, sucks his teeth.*)
- 50 ANGEL: Look, Stephen, if you're in such a big hurry to get outta here, how come you're just sittin around cleaning your teeth?
- STEPHEN: Hey, look, I'll be gone in a minute. I mean if it's too much to ask if I have a cigarette and a cup of coffee in peace, just say so. A person's supposed to unwind for two minutes a day, in case you ain't read the latest
- 55 medical report. If it's too much to ask to just lemme sit here in *peace* for two minutes, then say so. I wouldn't wanna take up a stool somebody was waitin for or anything. (*Looking around him.*) Will ya look at the waitin line to get on this stool.
- ANGEL (*Pause*): Did you notice what's playing at the films?
- 60 STEPHEN: Buncha crap, whuddya think?
- ANGEL (*Pause*): I saw ya circle somethin in the gift book the other mornin.
- STEPHEN: What *gift* book?

Continued

ANGEL: The Raleigh *coupon* gift book.

65 STEPHEN: Hey—com’ere. (ANGEL *advances close to him. He snatches the pencil from behind her ear and draws a circle on the newspaper.*) There. Now I just drew a circle on the newspaper. That mean I’m gonna get me that car?

ANGEL: Come on, Stephen, tell me. What’re ya gonna get?

STEPHEN: Whudduyou care what I’m gonna get?

70 ANGEL: Gee, Stephen, I’m not the FBI or somebody. What are you so upset about? Just tell me what you’re gonna get.

STEPHEN (*Mumbling irascibly*²): Back pack.

ANGEL: What?

STEPHEN: Whuddya, got home fries in your ears?

75 ANGEL: Just that I didn’t hear what you said is all.

STEPHEN: *Back. Pack.*

ANGEL: Who’s getting a back pack?

STEPHEN: The guy down the enda the counter. He’s hitchin to Guatamala.

ANGEL: You’re getting a back pack? How come?

80 STEPHEN: Whuddo people usually get a back pack for?

ANGEL: Ya gonna go campin.

STEPHEN: No I ain’t gonna go *campin*. I’m gonna go gettin the hell outta this lousy little town is where I’m gonna go *campin*.

ANGEL: When? I mean . . . when?

85 STEPHEN: When? Just as soon as I get somethin taken care of.

ANGEL: When will that be?

STEPHEN: When will that be? When I get it taken care of—when d’ya think. Lemme have a donut.

ANGEL (*Getting him a donut*): Where ya gonna go?

90 STEPHEN: Where am I gonna go? I’m gonna go hitchin that way (*pointing left*) or I’m gonna go hitchin that way (*pointing right*) and when I get to some place that don’t still smella Turdville here I’m gonna get me a decent job and I’m gonna make me some bread.³ (*He picks up the donut and bites into it.*)

95 ANGEL: Rye or whole wheat, Stephen?

STEPHEN: This is some donut. I think they glued the crumbs together with Elmer’s.⁴

ANGEL: Rye or whole wheat, Stephen?

STEPHEN (*With his mouth full*): Believe me, that ain’t funny.

Continued

²*irascibly*—irritably

³bread—slang expression for “money”

⁴Elmer’s—Elmer’s glue

100 ANGEL: Don't talk with your mouth full.
 STEPHEN: My coffee's cold. How d'ya like that? (*He looks at her. She pours him a fresh cup of coffee in a mug. She sets it down by him. He looks at it a minute, then pours the coffee from the mug into his paper cup.*) I told ya, I'm leavin in less'n two minutes.

105 ANGEL: That's right, I forgot.
 STEPHEN: Yeah, yeah.
 ANGEL: You better let your hair grow and get some different clothes if you're gonna hitch somewhere, Stephen. You're outta style. Nobody's gonna pick up a boy dressed like you with his hair like yours. And with a tattoo on his arm that says "Born Dead." People wear tattoos now that say "Love" and "Peace," Stephen, not "Born Dead."

110 STEPHEN: Love and peace my Aunt Fanny's butt! And who says I want *them* to pick me? I got a coupla hundred truck drivers come through here in the middle of the night that said they'd all gimme a ride anytime anywhere they was goin. You think I'm gonna lower myself to ride with those other morons—you're outta your mind.

115 ANGEL: Two hundred truck drivers? Uh-uh, I'm sorry, I have to call you on that one, Stephen. If it wasn't for Lyle's station and his motel, Lyle'd be our *only* customer.

120 STEPHEN: You know, right? Cause you're here all night while I'm home sacked out on my rear, so you know how many truck drivers still stop in here, now ain't that right?

ANGEL: In the three weeks since the by-pass opened, Stephen, you know exactly how many customers you had in the nights? You wanna know exactly how many, Stephen?

125 STEPHEN: No, I don't wanna know how many. I wanna have two minutes of peace to read my damn newspaper—if that's not askin too much! Is that askin too much? If it is, just say the word and I'll get the heck outta here and go to the damn cemetery or somewhere.

Mark Medoff
 Contemporary American playwright
When You Comin' Back, Red Ryder? won the Obie Award from
Village Voice, the Jefferson Award from the Joseph Jefferson Award
 Committee, and the Outer Critics Circle John Gasner Award in 1973–74.

IV. Questions 25 to 33 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from an article.

from AFTERNOON OF AN AMERICAN BOY

The following excerpt is set in Mount Vernon, New York, and in New York City some time in the 1910s. The writer recounts an episode that occurred when he was a teenager—his first date with a girl.

Her name was Eileen. She was my age and she was a quiet, nice-looking girl. She never came over to my yard to play, and I never went over there, and, considering that we lived so near each other, we were remarkably uncommunicative; nevertheless, she was the girl I singled out, at one point, to be
5 of special interest to me. Being of special interest to me involved practically nothing on a girl's part—it simply meant that she was under constant surveillance. On my own part, it meant that I suffered an astonishing disintegration when I walked by her house, from embarrassment, fright, and the knowledge that I was in enchanted territory.

10 In the matter of girls, I was different from most boys of my age. I admired girls a lot, but they terrified me. I did not feel that I possessed the peculiar gifts or accomplishments that girls liked in their male companions—the ability to dance, to play football, to cut up a bit in public, to smoke, and to make small talk. I couldn't do any of these things successfully, and seldom tried. Instead, I stuck
15 with the accomplishments I was sure of: I rode my bicycle sitting backward on the handle bars, I made up poems, I played selections from *Aida*¹ on the piano. In winter, I tended goal in the hockey games on the frozen pond in the dell. None of these tricks counted much with girls. In the four years I was in the Mount Vernon High School, I never went to a school dance and I never took a girl to a drugstore
20 for a soda or to the Westchester Playhouse or to Proctor's. I wanted to do these things but did not have the nerve. What I finally did manage to do, however, and what is the subject of this memoir, was far brassier, far gaudier. As an exhibit of teen-age courage and ineptitude, it never fails to amaze me in retrospect. I am not even sure it wasn't un-American.

25 My bashfulness and backwardness annoyed my older sister very much, and at about the period of which I am writing she began making strong efforts to stir me up. She was convinced that I was in a rut, socially, and she found me a drag in her own social life, which was brisk. She kept trying to throw me with girls, but I

Continued

¹*Aida*—opera written by Giuseppe Verdi

always bounced. And whenever she saw a chance she would start the phonograph
30 and grab me, and we would go charging around the parlor in the toils of the one-
step, she gripping me as in a death struggle, and I hurling her finally away from
me through greater strength. I was a skinny kid but my muscles were hard, and it
would have taken an unusually powerful woman to have held me long in the
attitude of the dance.

35 One day, through a set of circumstances I have forgotten, my sister managed
to work me into an afternoon engagement she had with some others in New York.
To me, at that time, New York was a wonderland largely unexplored. I had been
to the Hippodrome a couple of times with my father, and to the Hudson-Fulton
40 Celebration, and to a few matinées; but New York, except as a setting for
extravaganzas, was unknown. My sister had heard tales of tea-dancing at the
Plaza Hotel. She and a girl friend of hers and another fellow and myself went
there to give it a try.

The spectacle was a revelation to me. However repulsive the idea of dancing
was, I was filled with amazement at the setup. Here were tables where a fellow
45 could sit so close to the dance floor that he was practically on it. And you could
order cinnamon toast and from the safety of your chair observe girls and men in
close embrace, swinging along, the music playing while you ate the toast, and the
dancers so near to you that they almost brushed the things off your table as they
jogged by. I was impressed. Dancing or no dancing, this was certainly high life,
50 and I knew I was witnessing a scene miles and miles ahead of anything that took
place in Mount Vernon. I had never seen anything like it, and a ferment must
have begun working in me that afternoon.

Incredible as it seems to me now, I formed the idea of asking Eileen to
accompany me to a tea dance at the Plaza. The plan shaped up in my mind as an
55 expedition of unparalleled worldliness, calculated to stun even the most blasé girl.
The fact that I didn't know how to dance must have been a powerful deterrent, but
not powerful enough to stop me. As I look back on the affair, it's hard to credit
my own memory, and I sometimes wonder if, in fact, the whole business isn't
some dream that has gradually gained the status of actuality. A boy with any
60 sense, wishing to become better acquainted with a girl who was "of special
interest," would have cut out for himself a more modest assignment to start with—
a soda date or a movie date—something within reasonable limits. Not me. I
apparently became obsessed with the notion of taking Eileen to the Plaza and not
to any darned old drugstore. I had learned the location of the Plaza, and just
65 knowing how to get to it gave me a feeling of confidence. I had learned about
cinnamon toast, so I felt able to cope with the waiter when he came along. And I

Continued

banked heavily on the general splendor of the surroundings and the extreme sophistication of the function to carry the day, I guess.

I was three days getting up nerve to make the phone call. Meantime, I
70 worked out everything in the greatest detail. I heeled myself with a safe amount
of money. I looked up trains. I overhauled my clothes and assembled an outfit I
believed would meet the test. Then, one night at six o'clock, when Mother and
Father went downstairs to dinner, I lingered upstairs and entered the big closet off
my bedroom where the wall phone was. There I stood for several minutes,
75 trembling, my hand on the receiver.

I had rehearsed my first line and my second line. I planned to say, "Hello,
can I please speak to Eileen?" Then when she came to the phone, I planned to
say, "Hello, Eileen, this is Elwyn White." From there on, I figured I could
ad-lib it.

80 At last, I picked up the receiver and gave the number. As I had suspected,
Eileen's mother answered.

"Can I please speak to Eileen?" I asked, in a low, troubled voice.

"Just a minute," said her mother. Then, on second thought, she asked, "Who
is it please?"

85 "It's Elwyn," I said.

She left the phone, and after quite a while Eileen's voice said, "Hello,
Elwyn." This threw my second line out of whack, but I stuck to it doggedly.

"Hello, Eileen, this is Elwyn White," I said.

In no time at all I laid the proposition before her. She seemed dazed and
90 asked me to wait a minute. I assume she went into a huddle with her mother.
Finally, she said yes, she would like to go tea-dancing with me at the Plaza, and I
said fine, I would call for her at quarter past three on Thursday afternoon, or
whatever afternoon it was—I've forgotten.

I do not know now, and of course did not know then, just how great was the
95 mental and physical torture Eileen went through that day, but the incident stacks
up as a sort of unintentional un-American activity, for which I was solely
responsible. It all went off as scheduled: the stately walk to the depot; the solemn
train ride, during which we sat staring shyly into the seat in front of us; the
difficult walk from Grand Central across Forty-second to Fifth, with pedestrians
100 clipping us and cutting in between us; the bus ride to Fifty-ninth Street; then the
Plaza itself, and the cinnamon toast, and the music, and the excitement. The
thundering quality of the occasion must have delivered a mental shock to me,
deadening my recollection, for I have only the dimmest memory of leading Eileen
onto the dance floor to execute two or three unspeakable rounds, in which I vainly
105 tried to adapt my violent sister-and-brother wrestling act into something graceful

Continued

and appropriate. It must have been awful. At six o'clock, emerging, I gave no thought to any further entertainment, such as dinner in town. I simply herded Eileen back all the long, dreary way to Mount Vernon and deposited her, a few minutes after seven, on an empty stomach, at her home. Even if I had attempted to dine her, I don't believe it would have been possible; the emotional strain of the afternoon had caused me to perspire uninterruptedly, and any restaurant would have been justified in rejecting me solely on the ground that I was too moist.

E.B. White

American essayist, journalist, and critic

E.B. White's extensive contributions to *The New Yorker* were instrumental in making that magazine a success.

V. Questions 34 to 42 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from an article.

from BLACK WATERS

On March 23, 1989, Captain Joseph Hazelwood poured himself another drink at the Pipeline Club as the sun sank over the port of Valdez, Alaska. Across the harbour, a silvery lattice of pipes and nozzles pumped 1.26 million barrels of North Slope crude into the cavernous holds of the *Exxon*

10 *Valdez*. Shortly after 8 o'clock, a taxi collected the 42-year-old captain and dropped him at the dock of the marine terminal of the Alyeska Pipeline Service company, a consortium of oil companies that provides the fuel for one out of four cars in the United States. Hazelwood, who could not drive a car because of drunk-driving

20 convictions, took command of a \$125 million tanker the size of three football fields. The cruise would not be routine.

Once the tanker was out of the 900-yard-wide (825 m) Valdez Narrows, Hazelwood retired to his cabin. The task of piloting the supertanker through the narrow Prince William Sound fell to third

30 mate Gregory Cousins, for whom Hazelwood had left written instructions. But Cousins was not qualified to navigate the vessel in the sound. Within minutes of

changing lanes to avoid hitting icebergs, the *Valdez* veered toward the shallows of Bligh Reef, just 18 miles (29 km) away. The U.S. Coast Guard did not monitor the

40 *Valdez's* aberrant course. To save money two years ago, it had reduced the power of its radar, part of one of the world's most modern vessel-traffic systems.

At four minutes past midnight, the *Valdez* struck an underwater mountain that tore eight holes in the supertanker's hull. Twenty-three minutes later, Hazelwood radioed

50 the U.S. Coast Guard. "Yeah, this is the *Valdez*," he said. "We've fetched up hard on ground north of Goose Island off Bligh Reef, and evidently, we're going to be here for a while." In the event of a disaster, Alyeska's contingency plan called for \$3 million worth of emergency equipment to be on the scene within two hours. It was not, however,

60 until 16 hours and 267,000 barrels of crude later (one barrel equals two or three car fill-ups) that the first disaster equipment arrived, and by then, North America's largest oil spill had become as uncontrollable as it was destructive.

As it invaded the emerald-green waters of Prince William Sound, the

Continued

oil turned the sea and its shores into
70 a killing ground. It damaged the
livers and kidneys of thousands of
otters and poisoned them. It robbed
tens of thousands of ducks and
murres¹ of their insulation and left
them to die of hypothermia. It
contaminated the food supply of
bears, salmon and eagles. It
asphyxiated tidal-pool organisms
too small to make headlines. And
80 that was just the beginning of a
killing that will continue for years.
Dennis Kelso, Alaska's
environmental conservation
commissioner, surveyed the initial
pollution and said, "Something
beautiful has been defiled."

To observers in a small airplane
circling the sound, the oil slick
looked oddly hypnotic. The oil
90 shimmered like rainbows as it
headed toward herring spawning
grounds. Impaled on Bligh Reef,
the *Valdez* listed pathetically to one
side while the *Exxon Baton Rouge*,
tied alongside, frantically pumped
out four-fifths of its remaining cargo
of crude. Thousands of feet of
useless booms floated around the
vessels as dozens of tugs and oil
100 skimmers skittered about. "My
God, there's so much oil," said one
woman as she peered out the
airplane's window. "Who could
ever clean up this mess?"

For years before the spill, oil
companies and governments had

confidently answered that question
with a wealth of experts and
emergency plans. Oil companies
110 vowed that they had the cleanup
technology ready night and day.
Scientists with the American
Petroleum Institute said, "Don't
worry; the effects of a big spill on
marine life are temporary." And the
Coast Guard promised that all
supertankers "would be equipped
with navigational devices to proceed
safely." But in the wake² of the
120 *Valdez*, the oil-slick rhetoric
congealed into broken promises and
outright betrayals.

It is now clear that neither
government nor the oil industry can
corral a major oil spill on the open
ocean, even in calm seas. And
despite the best of intentions,
neither group can guarantee that
another major spill will not happen
130 as long as supertankers carry oil.
For Canadians, the spill's grim
implications go well beyond those
of a horrified backyard spectator.
Many experts agree that the next
major oil disaster will likely foul
Canadian water and beaches. David
Anderson, an advisor to the B.C.
government on oil transportation
and oil spills, is adamant: "There's
140 a better than 50 percent chance that
such a spill would happen in the
Strait of Juan de Fuca."

Without skill and organization
and luck, the odds of preventing a

Continued

¹murres—web-footed, short-winged seabirds that live in large colonies on cliffs

²wake—in the aftermath of, or the visible track of turbulence left by something moving through water

spill from poisoning thousands of seabirds and marine animals and countless micro-organisms are very slim. And neither skill nor organization nor luck was much in evidence during the *Valdez* accident. Nor were they in evidence when 231,000 gallons (875,000 L) of oil from the *Nestucca* fouled the beaches of Vancouver Island just three months earlier. Beach-cleaning equipment did not work. And Canadian government agencies bickered while marine life perished.

Both spills had been foretold. 160 Environmentalists and oil analysts have often described supertankers as “accidents waiting to happen.” But even when accidents did happen, as long ago as two decades, the environmental lessons learned were subsequently ignored. In fact, Patrick McTaggart-Cowan, who spent three years cleaning up after Canada’s first major oil disaster—

170 the sinking of the *Arrow* in Chedabucto Bay, Nova Scotia, in 1970—says that he has watched the same mistakes repeated again and again. “Judging by what’s going on up in Alaska, I really don’t think they’ve learned much since then.”

The lessons lost make a long and varied list. Since the *Arrow* and other disasters, the oil industry has 180 not improved the training of tanker crews. It has relied on cash compensation, rather than developing better oil-cleanup equipment. It has not appreciated the importance of timing in terms of responding to an oil spill. And it has not learned to regulate supertankers as thoroughly as the aviation industry polices aircraft. 190 “Right now, when a ship pulls away from the dock, the captain really owes nothing to man or God,” says McTaggart-Cowan.

Vladimiro Cernetig Jr.

Contemporary Canadian journalist

Vladimiro Cernetig Jr. is currently the Bureau Chief of the *Globe and Mail* in British Columbia; he worked out of Edmonton as the Alberta correspondent for the *Globe and Mail* from 1989 to 1993.

- VI. After reading the article “Black Waters,” Robin writes to her aunt and uncle in Victoria to thank them for her summer vacation and to express her concerns about the environment. This is a copy of the first draft of Robin’s letter, along with her hand-written revisions. Questions 43 to 49 in your Questions Booklet are based on this letter.

January 25, 1996

Dear Aunt Gail and Uncle Ken,

Paragraph

1

As I gaze out the window of my room, I see the signs of winter: a grey sky, white drifts of snow in the garden, and Dad’s snow-covered Chevy. I looked out the window and saw snow and dad’s old car. I wonder if the poor old

car will start in the spring? I close my eyes and think about our South Seas adventure last summer and I forget about the -28°C temperature.

Paragraph

2

I’m still day-dreaming about last summer. I couldn’t believe it when you called Mom and Dad last spring and asked them if I might be interested in a two-month sailing trip to the Marquesas Islands. And when I heard that you wanted me to be a member of the crew, I really couldn’t believe it, along with my cousins Wendy and John. Mom and Dad were ^{terrific} ~~super~~ and said “yes” irregardless of the fact that I had promised to help them ^{make} ~~do~~ some repairs at our lake cottage in the summer.

Paragraph

3

I can’t ever thank you enough for ^{inviting} ~~asking~~ me. I even improved my cooking skills on the trip! (Mom says that I should ask the other crew members about that before I congratulate myself too much!)

Continued

Paragraph 4 When I returned home, I thought a lot about the awesome beauty of the islands with their coral reefs to explore abundant look at, their fresh fish and fresh fruit, their colourful birds, and their friendly people. The islands are so beautiful, yet so delicate. I began to think about how vulnerable our coastlines are and how easily our environment can be damaged, so I decided to join the Environment Club at school.

Paragraph 5 I'm writing a report about oil spills, and I've just finished reading an article about the *Exxon Valdez* wreck. It really scared me and made me think about the possibility of similar problems in British Columbia. When I talked to Mom about this she mentioned that you also had concerns about the effects of major oil spills in British Columbia. I would appreciate it very much if you would send me any information you have about oil spills along the British Columbia coast. I will share this information with the other members of the Environment Club. Who knows? We may even decide to write to the oil companies, or we may take some other form of action.

Paragraph 6 I know that you are both dedicated bird-watchers and that you are active in several environmental groups. Maybe you have some ideas about what students living in Nalwen, Alberta, can do to protect our planet. I wish that you lived in Nalwen so that you could speak to our group! Please say "hello" to Wendy and John. Thanks again for including me in your South Seas holiday. I'll never forget it!

With love,

Robin

VII. Questions 50 to 57 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

DESKS

Piled on a loading dock where I walked,
student desks battered, staggered
by the dozens, as if all our talk
of knowledge was over,

5 as if there'd be no more thin blondes
with pigtails, no math, no art,
no birds to stare at. Surplus now, those moulds
we tried to sleep in, always hard

10 so it wouldn't be pleasant and we'd fall
awake in time for the one question
with no answer. Quiet as a study hall,
this big place, this final destination,

oblivious to whatever the weather is,
hearing the creak of the wind's weight.

15 The desks are leg-naked, empty, as if
we might yet come, breathless, late.

And all that time I thought of the flames
I hadn't guessed, of a blonde
I had loved for years, how the names

20 carved one into another would

all scar out the same, blunt, hard, in blue
searing, like love's first pain.
I stood there like a child, scared, new,
bird-eyed, not knowing why I came.

Dave Smith

Contemporary American poet

David Smith has been the recipient of many awards including a Guggenheim fellowship in 1982 and the Virginia prize in poetry in 1989.

VIII. Questions 58 to 70 in your Questions Booklet are based on this short story.

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON¹

I am speaking here of a time when I was eleven and lived with my family on our small farm on the west coast of Cape Breton. My family had been there for a long, long time and so it seemed had I. And much of that time seems like the proverbial yesterday. Yet when I speak on this Christmas 1977, I am not sure how much I speak with the voice of that time or how much in the voice of what I have since become. And I am not sure how many liberties I may be taking with the boy I think I was. For Christmas is a time of both past and present and often the two are imperfectly blended. As we step into its nowness we often look behind.

We have been waiting now, it seems, forever. Actually, it has been most intense since Halloween when the first snow fell upon us as we moved like muffled mummers² upon darkened country roads. The large flakes were soft and new then and almost generous and the earth to which they fell was still warm and as yet unfrozen. They fell in silence into the puddles and into the sea where they disappeared at the moment of contact. They disappeared, too, upon touching the heated redness of our necks and hands or the faces of those who did not wear masks. We carried our pillowcases from house to house, knocking on doors to become silhouettes in the light thrown out from kitchens (white pillowcases held out by whitened forms). The snow fell between us and the doors and was transformed in shimmering golden beams. When we turned to leave, it fell upon our footprints and as the night wore on obliterated them and all the records of our movements. In the morning everything was soft and still and November had come upon us.

My brother Kenneth, who is two and a half, is unsure of his last Christmas. It is Halloween that looms largest in his memory as an exceptional time of being up late in magic darkness and falling snow. "Who are you going to dress up as at Christmas?" he asks. "I think I'll be a snowman." All of us laugh at him and tell him Santa Claus will find him if he is good and that he need not dress up at all. We go about our appointed tasks waiting for it to happen.

I am troubled myself about the nature of Santa Claus and I am trying to hang on to him in any way that I can. It is true that at my age I no longer *really* believe in him yet I have hoped in all his possibilities as fiercely as I can; much in the same way, I think, that the drowning man waves desperately to the lights of the passing ship on the high sea's darkness. For without him, as without the man's ship, it seems our fragile lives would be so much more desperate.

Continued

¹To everything there is a season—from Ecclesiastes 3:1, "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven."

²mummers—actors in pantomime

35 My mother has been fairly tolerant of my attempted perpetuation. Perhaps
because she has encountered it before. Once I overheard her speaking about my
sister Anne to one of her neighbours. "I thought Anne would believe *forever*," she
said. "I practically had to tell her." I have somehow always wished I had not
40 heard her say that as I seek sanctuary and reinforcement even in an ignorance I
know I dare not trust.

Kenneth, however, believes with an unadulterated fervour, and so do Bruce
and Barry who are six-year-old twins. Beyond me there is Anne who is thirteen
and Mary who is fifteen, both of whom seem to be leaving childhood at an
alarming rate. My mother has told us that she was already married when she was
45 seventeen, which is only two years older than Mary is now. That too seems
strange to contemplate and perhaps childhood is shorter for some than it is for
others. I think of this sometimes in the evenings when we have finished our
chores and the supper dishes have been cleared away and we are supposed to be
doing our homework. I glance sideways at my mother, who is always knitting or
50 mending, and at my father who mostly sits by the stove coughing quietly with his
handkerchief at his mouth. He has "not been well" for two years and has
difficulty breathing whenever he moves at more than the slowest pace. He is most
sympathetic of all concerning my extended hopes and says we should hang on to
the good things in our lives as long as we are able. As I look at him out of the
55 corner of my eye, it does not seem that he has many of them left. He is old, we
think, at forty-two.

Yet Christmas, in spite of all the doubts of our different ages, is a fine and
splendid time, and now as we pass the mid-point of December our expectations
are heightened by the increasing coldness that has settled down upon us. The
60 ocean is flat and calm and along the coast, in the scooped-out coves, has turned to
an icy slush. The brook that flows past our house is almost totally frozen and
there is only a small channel of rushing water that flows openly at its very centre.
When we let the cattle out to drink, we chop holes with the axe at the brook's edge
so that they can drink without venturing onto the ice.

65 The sheep move in and out of their lean-to shelter restlessly stamping their
feet or huddling together in tightly packed groups. A conspiracy of wool against
the cold. The hens perch high on their roosts with their feathers fluffed out about
them, hardly feeling it worthwhile to descend to the floor for their few scant
kernels of grain. The pig, who has little time before his butchering, squeals his
70 displeasure to the cold and with his snout tosses his wooden trough high in the icy
air. The splendid young horse paws the planking of his stall and gnaws the
wooden cribwork of his manger.

We have put a protective barricade of spruce boughs about our kitchen door
and banked our house with additional boughs and billows of eel grass. Still, the

Continued

75 pail of water we leave standing in the porch is solid in the morning and has to be
broken with the hammer. The clothes my mother hangs on the line are frozen
almost instantly and sway and creak from their suspending clothespins like
sections of dismantled robots: the stiff-legged rasping trousers and the shirts and
80 sweaters with unyielding arms outstretched. In the morning we race from our
frigid upstairs bedrooms to finish dressing around the kitchen stove.

We would extend our coldness half a continent away to the Great Lakes of
Ontario so that it might hasten the Christmas coming of my oldest brother, Neil.
He is nineteen and employed on the "lake boats," the long flat carriers of grain
and iron ore whose season ends any day after December 10, depending on the ice
85 conditions. We wish it to be cold, cold on the Great Lakes of Ontario, so that he
may come home to us as soon as possible. Already his cartons have arrived.
They come from different places: Cobourg, Toronto, St. Catharines, Welland,
Windsor, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie. Places that we, with the exception of my
father, have never been. We locate them excitedly on the map, tracing their
90 outlines with eager fingers. The cartons bear the lettering of Canada Steamship
Lines, and are bound with rope knotted intricately in the fashion of sailors. My
mother says they contain his "clothes" and we are not allowed to open them.

For us it is impossible to know the time or manner of his coming. If the lakes
freeze early, he may come by train because it is cheaper. If the lakes stay open
95 until December 20, he will have to fly because his time will be more precious than
his money. He will hitchhike the last hundred or hundred and fifty kilometres
from either station or airport. On our part, we can do nothing but listen with
straining ears to radio reports of distant ice formations. His coming seems to
depend on so many factors which are out there far beyond us and over which we
100 lack control.

The days go by in fevered slowness until finally on the morning of December
23 the strange car rolls into our yard. My mother touches her hand to her lips and
whispers "Thank God." My father gets up unsteadily from his chair to look
through the window. Their longed-for son and our golden older brother is here at
105 last. He is here with his reddish hair and beard and we can hear his hearty laugh.
He will be happy and strong and confident for us all.

There are three other young men with him who look much the same as he.
They too are from the boats and are trying to get home to Newfoundland. They
must still drive a hundred and sixty kilometres to reach the ferry at North Sydney.
110 The car seems very old. They purchased it in Thorold for two hundred dollars
because they were too late to make any reservations, and they have driven steadily
since they began. In northern New Brunswick their windshield wipers failed but
instead of stopping they tied lengths of cord to the wipers' arms and passed them
through the front window vents. Since that time, in whatever precipitation, one of

Continued

115 them has pulled the cords back and forth to make the wipers function. This
information falls tiredly but excitedly from their lips and we greedily gather it in.
My father pours them drinks of rum and my mother takes out her mincemeat and
the fruitcakes she has been carefully hoarding. We lean on the furniture or look
120 from the safety of sheltered doorways. We would like to hug our brother but are
too shy with strangers present. In the kitchen's warmth, the young men begin to
nod and doze, their heads dropping suddenly to their chests. They nudge each
other with their feet in an attempt to keep awake. They will not stay and rest
because they have come so far and tomorrow is Christmas Eve and stretches of
mountains and water still lie between them and those they love. After they leave
125 we pounce on our brother physically and verbally. He laughs and shouts and lifts
us over his head and swings us in his muscular arms. Yet in spite of his happiness
he seems surprised at the appearance of his father whom he has not seen since
March. My father merely smiles at him while my mother bites her lip.

Now that he is here there is a great flurry of activity. We have left everything
130 we could until the time he might be with us. Eagerly I show him the fir tree on the
hill which I have been watching for months and marvel at how easily he fells it
and carries it down the hill. We fall over one another in the excitement of
decoration.

He promises that on Christmas Eve he will take us to church in the sleigh
135 behind the splendid horse that until his coming we are all afraid to handle. And
on the afternoon of Christmas Eve he shoes the horse, lifting each hoof and
rasping it fine and hammering the cherry-red horseshoes into shape upon the
anvil. Later he drops them hissing into the steaming tub of water. My father
sits beside him on an overturned pail and tells him what to do. Sometimes we
140 argue with our father, but our brother does everything he says.

That night, bundled in hay and in voluminous coats, and with heated stones at
our feet, we start upon our journey. Our parents and Kenneth remain at home but
all the rest of us go. Before we leave we feed the cattle and sheep and even the
pig all that they can possibly eat so that they will be contented on Christmas Eve.
145 Our parents wave to us from the doorway. We go six kilometres across the
mountain road. It is a primitive logging trail and there will be no cars or other
vehicles upon it. At first the horse is wild with excitement and lack of exercise
and my brother has to stand at the front of the sleigh and lean backwards on the
reins. Later he settles down to a trot and still later to a walk as the mountain rises
150 before him. We sing all the Christmas songs we know and watch for rabbits and
foxes scudding across the open patches of snow and listen to the drumming of
partridge wings. We are never cold.

When we descend to the country church we tie the horse in a grove of trees
where he will be sheltered and not frightened by the many cars. We put a blanket

Continued

155 over him and give him oats. At the church door the neighbours shake hands with
my brother. "Hello, Neil," they say. "How is your father?"
"Oh," he says, just "Oh."

The church is very beautiful at night with its festooned branches and glowing
candles and the booming, joyous sounds that come from the choir loft. We go
160 through the service as if we are mesmerized.

On the way home, although the stones have cooled, we remain happy and
warm. We listen to the creak of leather harness and the hiss of runners on the
snow and begin to think of the potentiality of presents. When we are about a
kilometre from home the horse senses his destination and breaks into a trot and
165 then a confident lope. My brother lets him go and we move across the winter
landscape like figures freed from a Christmas card. The snow from the horse's
hooves falls about our heads like the whiteness of the stars.

After we have stabled the horse we talk with our parents and eat the meal our
mother has prepared. And then I am sleepy and it is time for the younger children
170 to be in bed. But tonight my father says to me, "We would like you to stay up
with us a while," and so I stay quietly with the older members of the family.

When all is silent upstairs Neil brings in the cartons that contain his "clothes"
and begins to open them. He unties the intricate knots quickly, their whorls
falling away before his agile fingers. The boxes are filled with gifts neatly
175 wrapped and bearing tags. The ones for my younger brothers say "from Santa
Claus" but mine are not among them anymore, as I know with certainty they will
never be again. Yet I am not so much surprised as touched by a pang of loss at
being here on the adult side of the world. It is as if I have suddenly moved into
another room and heard a door click lastingly behind me. I am jabbed by my own
180 small wound.

But then I look at those before me. I look at my parents drawn together
before the Christmas tree. My mother has her hand upon my father's shoulder and
he is holding his ever present handkerchief. I look at my sisters who have crossed
this threshold ahead of me and now each day journey farther from the lives they
185 knew as girls. I look at my magic older brother who has come to us this
Christmas from half a continent away, bringing everything he has and is. All of
them are captured in the tableau³ of their care.

"Every man moves on," says my father quietly, and I think he speaks of Santa
Claus, "but there is no need to grieve. He leaves good things behind."

Alistair MacLeod

Contemporary Canadian writer

Alistair MacLeod has worked in the woods and the mines; he now
teaches English and creative writing at the University of Windsor.

³tableau—group of persons carefully arranged to suggest a thematic scene

Credits

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